

# Complex Predicate Constructions in Uzbek Language

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## Abstract

Complex predicates are defined as constructions consisting of preverb/converb/coverb + ‘light verb’ (Bowern 2006). Each component of the complex construction contributes to the internal argument structure. The typology of complex predicates exhibits cross-linguistic similarities and differences. This study investigates the complex predicate constructions in Uzbek, which possesses a rich variety of light verb constructions. Novel data from Uzbek is provided, and it is analyzed on the basis of proposed criteria in the government and binding theory (GB) literature for complex predicates. The analysis reveals that these constructions express simultaneity, cause and effect, and consecutivity. Both verbs in complex constructions share the same subject, and they describe a single event. However, the object may or may not be shared by both verbs. What is significant about Uzbek light verbs is that they both host inflection, and contribute to the event structure. That is, tense and agreement markers, as well as aspectual markers are carried by the light verb. The constituency is strict in complex predicates, and there cannot be an intervention between the converb and the light verb by such elements as interrogatives, negation, or temporal adverbs.

*Key words: Complex predicates, light verbs, Uzbek language, construction, derivation*

## Introduction

Many languages of the world possess complex verb constructions. Their typology includes various types of serial verbs (e.g. in languages of East and Southeast Asia, languages of West Africa and Oceania), light verbs of the languages of Asia, and converbal complex predication in Japanese, Korean, and Turkic (Bowern 2006; Öztürk 2003). Butt and Geuder

(2001:325) define complex predicates as constructions in which each component contributes to the meaning carried by the head. Moreover, predicate structure of these constructions is established by more than one element, which makes it difficult to decide which element in the clause is assigning the theta-role, or more than one element is assigning it simultaneously. In Turkic complex predicates, the structure which consists of V+V, the coverb determines the argument structure of the predicate (Bowerman 2006). However, the inflecting verb carries finite inflection, and it occupies the head position of the predicate. Research on complex verbs has been approached within various theoretical frameworks. The importance of work in contrastive perspective and integrating different language families in the analyses has been emphasized.

## 2. Definitions and Previous Research

### 2.1. Complex Predicates

Complex predicates are constructions in which more than one component is involved in functions associated with the head. These functions involve the argument structure and the theta-role assignment, and they appear to be determined ad interim by more than one element in the clause.

Butt (1995:2) presents the definition in (2) to explain the nature of complex predicates:

- (2) a. complex predicates are multi-headed; argument structure is complex, and is spread across multiple constituents.
- b. they are composed of more than one grammatical element, each of which contributes to part of the information normally associated with a head;
- c. their grammatical functional structure, however is that of a simple predicate; contributes part of the information normally associated with a head;
- d. light verb structures can be formed lexically or syntactically.

To sum up, what makes complex predicates ‘complex’ is the fact that they consist of two (or more) constituents which behave the same way as the simple verbal predicates do; multiple constituents take part in expressing the function of the predicate.

### 2.2 Light verbs

The term light verb has been coined by Jespersen (1965, Volume VI: 117), and it referred to the English V+NP constructions, as in (1) below:

(1) *Have a rest, a read, a cry, a think*

*Take a sneak, a drive, a walk, a plunge*

*Give a sigh, a shout, a shiver, a pull, a ring*

The reason behind the notion of ‘light’ as used here is that the verbs do not exhibit full predication. In other words, one does not actually ‘give’ a shout but ‘shouts’, or does not ‘take’ a drive, but ‘drives’. In this regard, verbs serve as a verbal licenser for nouns. However, it cannot be concluded that verbs entirely lack semantic content, as there is a clear difference between *take a ride* and *give a ride*. All things considered, these types of verbs do not preserve their full semantic content, nor are they semantically empty. Butt (1995), based on agreement, anaphora, and control analysis proposes light verb constructions to be monoclausal.

Within the GB framework, complex predicates are referred to as light verbs, and their argument structure is suggested to consist of X+ V (see e.g. Grimshaw and Mester 1988). Various definitions are given by many other researchers to describe light verbs, and it has also been observed that light verbs exhibit different argument structure cross-linguistically.

As for the semantics of light verbs, it exhibits cross-linguistic analogy. In the languages that possess only one light verb, the most prototypical light verb is ‘do’ or ‘make’.

Other examples appear as (4):

- a. motion verbs such as ‘go’ or ‘come’
- b. verbs of impact such as ‘hit’ or ‘spear’
- c. ‘give’
- d. verbs of trajectory such as ‘catch’ or ‘fall’
- e. psych verbs and verbs of volition such as ‘think’, ‘want’ and ‘try’

(Adapted from Bowerman (2006:8).

### 2.2.1 Event structure of the light verbs (in Turkic)

Butt (1995) proposes that light verbs embody information about the event structure. So they can be stated to be semantically bleached light verbs which contribute to the structure of the event, such as duration or telicity.

Light verb constructions in Turkic complex predicates possess certain distinctions which require a special treatment. The light verb constructions can contribute to the predicate meaning in the following four ways (5): (Bowern 2006:8):

- (5) a. Internal event structure: The light verb gives additional information about the internal structure of the event denoted by the coverb.
- b. Trajectory: The light verb marks associated motion, i.e., the path of the action/ event denoted by the coverb.
- c. Quasi-modal information: The light verb encodes modal information about the event.
- d. Participant information: The light verb provides information about the theta-role of clause participants and in some cases adds a theta-role to the argument structure of the predicate.

Lexical verbs too, can be used in complex predicates, in which a gerund or participle combines with an inflecting verb. An example is provided in (6):

(6) Bola kitobni o'qib turdi. (Uzbek)

Child book –ACC read-GER 'stand'3-PST.

'A child kept on reading the book'.

In example (6) above, the finite verb is *tur-* 'stand'. However, the theta-role is assigned by the verb *o'qi-* 'read', and the same verb is assigning ACC case to the NP *kitob* 'book'. The main lexical meaning of the predicate is expressed by gerund *o'qi-* 'read', and tense/aspect and agreement are marked on the finite verb *tur-* 'stop'.

Bowern (2004) proposes verb classification in order to describe the functional properties of this type of light verb constructions in Turkic languages. In Turkish, for instance, the verb '*durmak*' is effectively used to form the complex predicates. In Uzbek, on the other hand, there are more than twenty such verbs used to form these constructions, and they display more idiosyncratic and lexicalized meaning (Bowern 2006). Section 4 will provide and analyze examples for various types of light verb constructions.

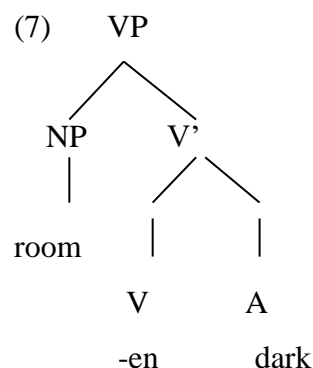
### 3. Approaches for analyzing complex predicates

Studying the syntax of complex predication involves the analysis of relationship between the preverb and the light verb, and their role in clause internal argument assignment. The two main approaches implicate *argument unification* (e.g. Butt 1995; see also Wilson 1999) versus

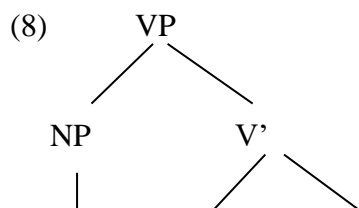
*argument transfer* (Grimshaw and Mester (1988). The former would involve merging of the preverb with the light verb, thereby contributing to the argument structure of the derived complex predicate. As for the latter case, the light verb lacks the argument structure of its own, and the argument structure of the preverb is passed on to the light verb.

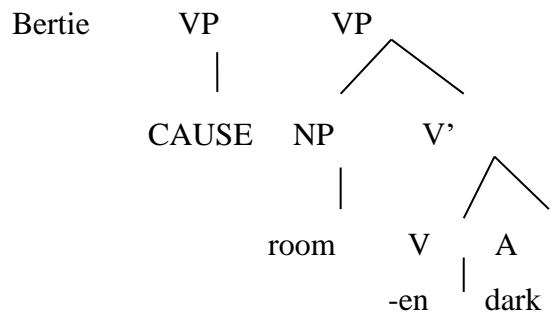
However, Hale and Keyser (2002) argue for a different approach with regards to the analysis of the verbal predicates. Under this analysis all verbal structures are complex, since they are proposed to have a root and a verbal head which undergo conjoinment. This theory attempts to bring together all alternations in argument structure in L-syntax, arguing that roots themselves have complex derivational structure. It argues that intransitive verbs such as ‘work’ or ‘fish’ are derived conflating a nominal element with an abstract verbal head, and it views the difference between simple and complex predicates in the realization of S-syntax.

Hale and Keyser (2002) theory explains numerous constructions and argument structure variations. Verbs such as ‘reddden’, ‘darken’, ‘clear’, etc. are proposed to consist of an adjectival complement and an abstract verbalizing head. The tree structure in (7) below illustrates it in the example of ‘darken’, as in ‘the room darkened’.



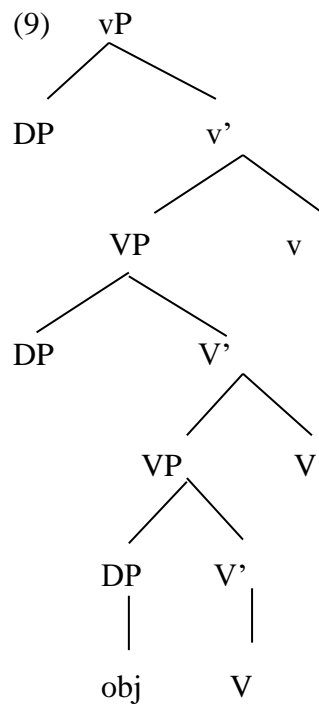
As for the transitive verb construction as in ‘Alan darkened the room’, another abstract causative head is introduced in the structure (8), and the adjective-verb complex conflates into the higher verb.





### 3.1. Phrase structure of light verb constructions

Various opinions have been proposed within the GB literature to capture the tree structure representations of the X+V constructions. The VP shell hypothesis (dates back to Larson, 1988, 1990; Hale and Keyser 1991, 1993; Chomsky 1995) treats the light verb as a ‘little-v’ above the VP (9):



### 3.2. Criteria for identifying complex predicates

Bowern (2006) lists a set of formal criteria according to which complex predicates can be identified. Those criteria will be directly cited below:

- a. Event structure – the predicate describes a single event (as viewed by speakers) and not a sequence of conjoined events;
- b. Selection criteria – almost any verb can be in the coordinate construction as long as the two events are consecutive and the subjects are identical, but the verb in complex predicate constructions is confined to a set of up to approximately 20 verbs (Wurm 1953:514).
- c. Word-order – the converb and the inflected verb cannot be separated by intervening material, and constituency is strict;
- d. Nominalization – predicate as a whole may be nominalized;
- e. Interrogatives – the predicate behaves as a single unit for interrogative marking;
- f. Negation and temporal adverbs – have scope over the entire predicate, not just the converb.

The following section will analyze complex predicate constructions from Uzbek based on the abovementioned criteria. 4. Data and analysis

The previous section discussed certain criteria which can be elaborated in order to identify and analyze complex predicate constructions. The first criterion sets the event structure of the predicate and states that a predicate describes a single event (as viewed by speakers) and not a sequence of conjoined events. This will be checked in the example (10) below:

(10) Qiz ko'chadan o't-ib bor-yap-ti.  
girl NOM street DAT pass-IB go-PRS-PROG-3SG

‘The girl is walking along the street’.

As seen in (10) above, the predicate consists of V+V, the verb *o't* ‘pass’, and the light verb *bor* ‘to go’. Both verbs refer to the same event, which is ‘walk along/past’. The light verb is expressing aspectual meaning of continuity.

The second criterion, the selection criterion, proposes that not all verbs can be used in complex predicate constructions, yet that there are certain verbs that can be used in such constructions. The number of verbs varies cross-linguistically, from a single verb to almost twenty. With more than twenty verbs, Uzbek is very rich when it comes to the number of light verbs. Some of these verbs are ‘ol’ (take), ‘bor’ (go), ‘kel’ (come), ‘qil’ (do), ‘ket’ (leave), ‘qol’

(stay), ‘o’t’ (pass), ‘ber’ (give) and ‘qo’y’ (put). In (11) and (12) examples with some of these verbs are provided:

(11) Erkak ko’rkam guldaſta sotib ol -di. (Uzbek)

Man beautiful bouquet buy-IB take-3PST

‘The man bought a beautiful bouquet’.

(12) Bunaqa ishlarni o’rganib qo’ygin.

Such business learn- IB put -2IMP

‘You should learn these kind of things’.

In (11) the light verb ‘ol’ (take) is used with aspectual meaning to express completeness. Although two verbs are being used, ‘sot’ (buy) and ‘ol’ (take), the predicate is referring to the single event of buying. In (12) we have an example of a different light verb, ‘qo’y’ (put). This verb is used with a meaning similar to English modal verb *should*. The converb ‘o’rgan’ (learn) together with the light verb is expressing the overall idea ‘*should learn*’

The third criterion proposed that there is a rigid word order and that the converb and the inflected verb cannot be separated by intervening material and constituency is strict. In order to check this criterion, let us have a look at example (13 a, b, c):

(13) a. Ahmadjon shoshiſ ketib qoldi.

A hurry-IB go-IB remain-3.PST

‘Ahmadjon left hurriedly ‘

b. \* Ahmadjon shoshiſ qolib ketti.

A hurry-IB remain –IB go-3.PST.

c. Ahmadjon darrov shoshiſ ketib qoldi.

A immediately hurry-IB go-IB remain-3.PST

‘Ahmadjon left immediately in a hurry’

d. \* Ahmadjon shoshiſ ketib darrov qoldi

A hurry-IB go-IB immediately remain-3.PST

Examples (13 a, b, c, d) prove the third criterion to be true, since changing the order of the converb and the light verb, as in (13 b), and inserting an adverb between the converb and the light verb, as in (13 d) results in ungrammatical structures. To sum up, no element can be



inserted between the converb and the light verb, nor can the order of the converb and the light verb be changed.

The fourth criterion proposes that the whole complex predicate can be nominalized. Nominalization markers in Uzbek are suffixes such as *-lik*, *-moq*, *-(y)ish*, *-gan*, *-ajak*, and *-ma*.

Examples (14) and (15) exhibit nominalization of the predicates and it applies to the whole predicate:

- (14) Kitob-ni qachon sotib ol-gan-i-ni bil-may-man.  
 book ACC when buy-IB take-3PRS-NMLZ know-NEG-AGR  
 ‘I don’t know when he bought the book’.
- (15) Uning ketib qolish-i shubhali tuyil- di.  
 he-GEN leave-IB stay-NMLZ doubtful seem-3PST  
 ‘His leaving seemed doubtful/mysterious’.

According to the fifth criterion, the predicate behaves as a single unit for interrogative marking. Examples (16 a, b) demonstrate how interrogatives are formed:

- (16) a. Erkak ko’rkam guldasta sot-ib ol –di-mi?  
 Man beautiful bouquet buy-IB take-3PST-Q  
 ‘Did the man buy a beautiful bouquet?’
- (16) b. \*Erkak ko’rkam guldasta sot-ib-mi ol –di?  
 Man beautiful bouquet buy-IB-Q take-3PST?

And the final criterion about negative marking proposes that negation and temporal adverbs have scope over the entire predicate, not just the converb. Therefore the negative marker appears after the light verb, and its appearance with the converb results in ungrammatical structures (17 a, b):

- (17) a. Erkak ko’rkam guldasta sot-ib ol –ma-di.  
 Man beautiful bouquet buy-IB take-NEG-3PST  
 ‘The man didn’t buy a beautiful bouquet’
- (17) b. \*Erkak ko’rkam guldasta sot-ma-ib ol -di.  
 man beautiful bouquet buy-NEG-IB take- 3PST

Based on the provided examples above it can be concluded that complex predicate constructions in Uzbek behave in line with the criteria proposed by Bower (2006). The next section will make final remarks and draw conclusions in reference to the analyzed data.

## 5. Conclusions

There are important elements to be investigated at all levels of analysis, from basic discussions of what constitutes a complex predicate, to how they are shaped, how they vary, and how they change. This study has discussed examples of complex predicate constructions by providing novel data from Uzbek and by discussing them. Uzbek is extremely productive when it comes to this type of constructions. Unlike many languages that possess a single light verb, Uzbek is rich in variety of verbs used in complex constructions. They can employ agreement markers, which differentiates them from serial verbs. Provided examples have shown that converbials express simultaneity, cause and effect, and consecutivity. Both verbs in complex constructions share the same subject, i.e. they describe a single event. However, the object may or may not be shared by both verbs. Light verbs may differ cross-linguistically, some receive inflection, and others may be subject to argument transfer. What is significant about Uzbek light verb constructions is they both host inflection and contribute to the event structure. That is, tense and agreement markers, as well as aspectual markers are carried by the light verb in these structures. The constituency is strict in complex predicates in Uzbek, and there cannot be an intervention between the converb and the light verb by such elements as interrogatives, negation, or temporal adverbs.

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